

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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A RED SISTER.

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CHAPTER XXX.

THE thought with which Herrick lay down to rest—of his own folly in not being able to see what he ought to see, or to hear what he ought to hear—rose up with him and went with him through the fields and lanes that, with many a wind and curve, led to Longridge village churchyard.

His road lay in an opposite direction to the bleak heath and the outskirts of the coal country. Round the village church lingered all that was left of rural pastoral life in the district. The School Board—by the strenuous efforts of the Vicar—had, as yet, been kept at bay, and the children on their way to the parish schools dropped little curtsies or pulled at curly locks as Herrick went along the village street. He beckoned to one of the curly-headed urchins to hold his horse for him while he went into the grave-yard. The church lay a little way back from the village street, and was reached by a long, narrow avenue of low-growing, solemn yews. Beneath these the autumnal mist still lingered, as if kept from rising by the heavy boughs. But beyond, on the farther side of the church, the morning sun shone resplendent from out a sky—blue, as if dyed with cobalt—on graves of all sorts and conditions of men: on low, sunken mounds, with never so much as a wooden cross to proclaim the names of their occupants; on lofty granite obelisks, like the one of which Herrick was in quest; and here and there on mossy lichen-eaten

stones with scarce a trace of inscription left to them.

As Herrick quitted the avenue for this sunnier portion of God's acre, he was not a little startled by the appearance of his dog Argus, who came suddenly bounding from behind a tall tombstone, and with loud bark and exceedingly wet paws, gave him an enthusiastic greeting.

Looking in the direction whence the dog had come, his eyes were met by a greater surprise still. In a spare plot of ground, immediately facing the granite obelisk which marked the last resting-place of the Gaskells, stood an old thorn-tree, ablaze now with its own scarlet berries and the wild luxuriance of bryony which twisted itself round about the split trunk and peeped in and out among the branches. Beneath this old tree sat a lady, in deep black, with a sketch-book upon her knee. A second glance told him that this lady was his cousin, Honor.

A sudden flush of annoyance passed over him. He had come for a quiet ten minutes to a spot to him more hallowed than any other on earth, and here was this girl, who had called him a fool to his face, with whom in fact he had nothing in common, on the holy ground before him!

With her pencil in hand, too—the pencil which had already satirised his mother and himself! What preposterous piece of caricature had she on hand now that she must needs come to this solemn place for inspiration? Was nothing sacred in her eyes, not even the last resting-place of her own kith and kin? Was it possible that she was making a sketch of that granite obelisk in order to introduce it effectively as a background in some ridiculous character-sketch! He checked the thought with difficulty as Lady Honor,

having had his arrival announced to her by Argus, came forward to meet him with outstretched hand.

She did not pick her way over the still-dewy grass—straight over everything she went. Possibly, however, this mattered little, for no doubt her skirts were already bedraggled and her boots soddened by her walk down the deeply-rutted lanes—a walk most likely accomplished in similar free and easy fashion.

"I did not know you were coming here this morning," she said, with the fixed, straight look in her eyes habitual to her, "or else I would have stayed away."

Herrick was more than half inclined to repeat her remark verbatim for an answer. He restrained himself, however, saying only:

"It is the only opportunity I shall have before I go. I sail this evening, you know."

"Yes, I know," answered Honor, hastily, and in a tone which, to his fancy, painfully recalled the one in which she had passed judgement on his lack of wisdom. "But it did not occur to me that you would be here so early this morning, and, as I particularly wanted to make a sketch to send to a friend of mine, I came."

There was no possibility of ignoring what that sketch was. Her sketch-book, held open to dry the fresh colours, displayed to view the gaunt granite obelisk and massive iron railings which marked John Gaskell's grave.

"That friend of yours ought to be a very near and dear one to have such a sketch as that sent to him—or her," said Herrick, gravely.

"That friend of mine is a very near and dear one," said Honor, in precisely Herrick's tone of voice—if it had cost her her life this girl must indulge her habit of mimicry—"and I have sent already to that friend of mine," she resumed, "a sketch of Longridge Castle—"

"And its inhabitants?"

"Why, of course! What's the good of a shell without its kernel? Now I want to send him the sketch of Uncle John's grave."

Could it be that her voice faltered over the last three words? thought Herrick, his heart for a moment softening towards his cousin.

As they had talked they had walked towards the tall obelisk, and now stood beside it on the lately-removed and

replaced turf, over which, here and there, the gravel still lay in brown patches.

On the big block of granite, from which the obelisk sprang, lay a thickly-twisted wreath of wild honeysuckle and ivy. The dew still lingering here and there on the luscious flowers showed them to have been freshly gathered.

Herrick looked from the wreath to Honor, from Honor to the wreath.

She turned her head away. There could be but little doubt whose hand had laid that wreath there.

His first thought was one of surprise; his second was an ungracious one. What right had she thus to associate herself with him and his mother in love and grief for the dead? Relative, though she might be, she knew nothing of his father or grandfather, save their names; and these, no doubt, had often in her hearing been associated sneeringly with plebeian wealth and mushroom grandeur.

"It was very good of you, but——" he began, coldly.

She turned her face quickly towards him. There was a shining light like that of tears in her eyes.

"But what right had I to lay it there?" she said, finishing his sentence for him.

Herrick was silent.

"What right, indeed!" she said, speaking very fast and with an undernote of pathos which he had never heard in her voice before. "What right have such ugly ducklings as I to show affection for any living soul! What presumption on my part to imagine that any one, living or dead, would be the better for my giving them a thought!"

Herrick was amazed at the depth of feeling she threw into her words. The occasion did not seem to warrant it.

"No girl with a father and mother living should speak in that fashion," he said, quietly.

Lady Honor turned and faced him.

"A father and mother!" she cried impetuously. "Shall I tell you what my father and mother think of me for having dared to come into the world a girl, and a girl, too, with an ugly face and a clumsy figure? Shall I tell you that my first recollection of my mother is her giving an order to my nurse to keep me out of her room as much as possible? My face was a shock to her nerves, and my voice gave her a headache, she said. And 'To think that you should be a Southmoor and the last of the name,' were the words with which my

father packed me off to school at Brussels, and received me back with when I came home the other day."

Herrick was touched. He took her hand.

"You would never have heard such words as those from him," he said, pointing downwards to the newly-turned sod with its browned grass and trampled daisies.

"I know it," said Honor, releasing her hand quickly, as if such forms of sympathy were unknown to her. "When I looked at his big picture hanging in the hall, and saw his kind eyes and beautiful mouth, I said to myself: 'If I could only have known you, how I should have loved you,' and then I felt as if I must—must do something for him: lay a wreath upon his grave; say a prayer for him." She broke off for a moment, then added: "Ah! that's where I envy the Catholics so! They can pray for their dear, dead friends as well as for their living ones."

It was all said in the girl's usual, frank, impetuous, rush-ahead fashion.

Herrick stood silent, self-convicted of stupidity for not having guessed at a condition of things which seemed to him now perfectly intelligible.

She misinterpreted his silence.

"But there, I'll take the wreath away," she went on impetuously. "Why should I force my way into your holy ground!"

She bent over the railings. Herrick laid his hand upon hers.

"Pray let it be, Honor," he said in a low, disturbed tone. "I am very grateful to you for your kind thought of my father."

Then there fell a silence between them; a silence during which Herrick's compassion for his cousin in her loveless young life grew apace. He longed to offer her sympathy, but did not know how to begin. His thoughts flew to Lois.

"How I wish you and Lois could have met!" he said, "you'd have been bound to take to her, and—"

"I'm not so sure," interrupted Honor, quickly; "I don't take to everybody I meet."

Herrick froze a little.

"Everybody? No! But if you have an eye for beauty, and truth, and goodness—"

"I'm not so sure that I have," again interrupted Honor. "I have an eye for ugliness, and meanness, and wickedness—"

"And folly," finished Herrick, meaningly.

"And folly? Yes; when it's thrust under my very eyelids!" she answered quite unabashed; although, the moment after she added a little apologetically, "you see I've had so few opportunities of making acquaintance with what is 'beautiful, and true, and good.' As a rule, I'm more accustomed to the ugly and mean, and, therefore, recognise it more quickly."

"I think you do yourself an injustice," said Herrick, gravely. "Have you not, only a moment ago, confessed that when you looked up at my father's portrait, before anything else, you saw the kindness in his eyes—"

"I beg your pardon," interrupted Honor, "I did not say 'before anything else.' When I first looked up at Uncle John's portrait, 'before anything else,' I saw that the artist had given him a streaky complexion. It was after that that I found out he had kind eyes and a beautiful mouth."

Herrick turned sharply away. Was nothing too sacred for ridicule in this girl's eyes? He pulled out his watch. She did not heed the action; but went on frankly, carelessly:

"And the first time I saw you—before even I saw that you were the image of Aunt Jo, I saw that you were a slovenly writer, for you had ink under your fingernails. Now, if I were to see your Lois, before I saw her beauty and goodness, I should find out her weak point, for of course she has a weak point!"

"Yes;" said Herrick, sadly, "she has a weak point, and it has cost me dear: she can't stand her ground and face an enemy. If she is scared, she takes refuge in flight."

"Poor child! I would love to take care of her," said Honor, for all the world as if she were in the forties, instead of little more than a child herself. Then, after a moment's pause she said, as if struck by a sudden idea: "Herrick, I would give anything to frighten Aunt Jo nearly out of her life."

Herrick started. The idea, thus abruptly expressed, assuredly sounded oddly in its present connection. It struck a curious vein of thought. Here had Honor been little more than a week in the house, and in that short space of time had evidently made observations enough to fill a notebook. The lookers-on, sometimes, see more of a game than the players.

He hazarded a question:

"Do you mind telling me, Honor, if you have any special reason for saying this?"

"Not in the least," she answered.

"Aunt Jo seems to me to be one of those persons who are sent into the world for the whole and sole purpose of frightening the timid and weak—a sort of embodied nightmare. One look at her would be enough to set old people or children shuddering."

Lady Honor did not know what a painful memory of an old man's death-bed her words conjured up to Herrick's mind. Nevertheless, he felt called upon to enter his protest against her sharp criticism.

"Kindly remember that you are talking of my mother," he said, a little stiffly.

He laid his hand on her arm, and led her away from the grave as he spoke. To his fancy the very turf, with its trampled daisies, seemed to cry out to him:

"Would you two dare to talk thus if he who lies beneath your feet stood there by your side?"

Honor assuredly did not share his sensitiveness.

"Why, what difference can that possibly make?" she said, bluntly. "You may call my father or mother embodied nightmares, or embodied anything else you please, and I shan't find fault with you. But honestly, Herrick, I came to your house prepared to love—yes, to love Aunt Jo—you know, I have had very few people to love in my lifetime. And when I saw Uncle John's picture, I said to myself, 'No one could live thirty years with that man and not be the better for it.' And I tried to get into her room while she was so ill, but they wouldn't let me. Then you know how I bounced in on her with a bunch of grapes—oh, I had taken such trouble in choosing that bunch! And what do you think she said to me after you had dashed out of the room as you did, in a temper? Not 'Honor, you are a darling;' or 'How I shall enjoy them;' but, 'Honor, I shall be glad if you will allow my maid to do your hair for you while you remain here; it does not look as it ought to look!' That was how my grapes and the offer of my affection were received!"

They had turned down the yew avenue as they had talked, and now stood at the churchyard gate.

The lad came forward with Herrick's horse. He twisted the reins round his arm, and side by side the cousins walked through the quiet village street, with Argus at their heels.

Herrick's thoughts were very busy. Lady Honor, throwing a straight look at him

with her bright, prominent eyes, said, a little suddenly, a little brusquely:

"Poor Herrick! From the bottom of my heart I pity you."

Herrick started; her outspoken sympathy struck a harsh note of contrast with a gentle voice which had whispered in his ear: "My poor, poor boy! If only I could bear this sorrow for you," while a soft hand had tenderly caressed his hair. Yet such as it was, it was not sympathy to be rejected.

"Thank you, Honor," he said, presently. "You don't see me at my best just now, I'll admit. Yesterday you called me a fool, and, honestly, trouble has come upon me so thick and fast lately, that I feel as if my brains were leaving me!"

"Oh, I didn't mean I thought sorrow had turned your brain, I meant I thought you were a fool for the way you set to work to meet it."

"I shall be grateful to you if you will tell me a better way of meeting my troubles," he answered, sadly. "If you refer specially to my trip to America in search of Lois, will you kindly tell me what better course you see open to me?"

"Staying at home," said Honor, promptly. "Look here, Herrick, Aunt Jo told me a little about you and Lois. That is to say, she said you had formed an undesirable attachment for a girl beneath you in station"—here Herrick made an impatient movement with his hand—"but that, left to itself, she had no doubt that the attachment would die a natural death." Here Herrick uttered an angry exclamation.

Lady Honor went on:

"Of course, when Aunt Jo spoke of an 'undesirable attachment,' I fell in love with the girl on the spot; and I thought, 'I wonder what you have done to scare that undesirable girl away from the place.' I looked straight at her—so——"—here Honor faced Herrick with so fixed a stare in her prominent eyes, that it seemed as if they must possess the crab-like power of protruding themselves—"and Aunt Jo's eyes drooped immediately. I've done it once or twice since, and her eyes invariably droop when I stare hard at her. Now, Herrick, if *Cedipus*——"

"Oh, for Heaven's sake let *Cedipus* alone!" exclaimed Herrick.

"I can't; it's a case in point. Now, it seems to me, if *Cedipus* had done as you are doing—started off on a voyage to the other side of the globe, the riddle of the

Sphinx would have remained unsolved to the present day; but no doubt he stared and stared at the monster until its ugly face was stamped on his mind, and—

"You needn't go on any further, I see what you mean, interrupted Herrick a little sharply, for the simile pained him; "but I assure you you are mistaken if you think my mother has had anything to do with Lois's sudden flight. I have her express assurance on the matter. I know her to be as incapable of subterfuge and petty lying as—well—as you are. No, nothing else in life suggests itself but this journey to America, and go I must."

"Go, then," said Honor, "and I will stay here at Longridge, and stare at the Sphinx for you. I rather like the idea, it turns the tables on father and Aunt Jo. They've concocted a little plan to keep me here for my benefit—I'll fall in with it for theirs."

After this, the talk between the cousins grew easy and confidential. During their walk back to the Castle, there did not fall a single five minutes of silence between them. Herrick, in glowing language, told the story of his wooing and winning of Lois White, and Honor reciprocated with the tale of her loveless nursery days, and the miserable school life at Brussels which had followed.

"The pupils, one and all, were ill-fed, ill-taught, and brow-beat," was her terse summing-up of a condition of things which she had depicted vigorously in detail. "They were poor, and had no one to speak up for them. I was treated somewhat better than the rest, because I had a handle to my name, and, if I had chosen, could have visited at the Embassy. The teachers were mean, under-bred, detestable—with one exception."

Herrick turned sharply and faced her. "Name him," he said, brusquely, and bluntly, as she herself would have spoken.

"M. Henri Van Zandt, the drawing master," she said, boldly, defiantly; but, for all that, with a sudden flame in her cheeks, which made them approach in colour to her hair.

"Is that the friend for whom you made your sketch this morning?"

"Yes."

"And those you have previously made of the Castle and its inhabitants?"

"Yes."

"Take care, Honor, I may think it necessary to ask my mother to give an eye to your correspondence."

Honor clapped her hands. "Oh, the very thing!" she cried, "it would be heavenly to feel that one was defying every relative one had in the world! I've told father and mother, over and over again, that on the very day I'm one-and-twenty, I'm going over to Brussels to marry M. Van Zandt, and we have had no end of storms over it; but, fancy the exquisite pleasure of holding up a letter to Aunt Jo, and saying, 'Aunt Jo, I'm going into the village to post this letter to my dear old drawing master, and by-and-by I'm going to marry him, and together we shall set up a shop on the Montagne de la Cour, for the sale of lead-pencils and artists' colours.'"

"Honor!"

"Oh, don't draw a long face! It's my very life to be always 'in the opposition.' I'm a born Nihilist, Democrat, Socialist, whatever you like to call it. Directly a thing is forbidden to me by 'the powers that be,' I find it's the only thing in life worth doing."

Herrick interrupted the girl's light talk with a serious question:

"Tell me what sort of a man is this M. Van Zandt, for whom you are ready to defy every relative you have in the world?"

Lady Honor's answer was characteristic.

"When I first saw him I saw only that he was old—over forty, that is—and ugly; oh, as ugly as I am, and very badly dressed. After I had tumbled into the water one day, and he had jumped in and saved me, I found out that he had beautiful eyes, and that he was as chivalrous as a knight-errant, and that nothing in the world could suit him so well as his own shabby coats and hats. After this we naturally got on amazingly well together;" she broke off for a moment, then added, "but before this I had won his heart. Shall I tell you how?"

"I am deeply interested, I shall like amazingly to know," answered Herrick.

"Well, it was in class, and the Gorgon-eyes of the teachers were upon us, and we were all silent as mutes. The water-colour class were drawing from a study after Cuyp, a level Dutch meadow with sheep and goats browsing. I was always quicker than the other girls at drawing, and before they were half-way through, my sketch was finished, all except the faces of my animals, which I left vacant. M. Van Zandt passed once and looked over my shoulder. 'Pourquoi donc, mademoiselle?'

he said, pointing to the eyeless, noseless creatures. He didn't say 'Pourquoi donc?' next time he passed, for every one of those creatures had a face given to it in lead-pencil. All the poor little persecuted teachers and pupils in the school figured as sheep, all the mean, tell-taling, underbred pupils and teachers came out as goats. He put the sketch into his pocket at once, and told me that it was worth living his twenty years of cheap teaching over again to see Mademoiselle Dutertre—the head of the school—with a beard and curly horns."

They had now reached the hall-door of the Castle, and Lady Honor, with a look on her face which seemed to say that she considered the last word on M. Van Zandt's perfections had been spoken, disappeared into the house.

LUMBERING IN CANADA.

It was with no very hopeful feeling that, a few years ago, I took passage in an Allan Liner for Montreal, to seek my fortune in the Far West. I did not want to go out of England at all, and I hated the idea of farming anywhere. But go I must. There were too many mouths to be filled at home already. The business in which I had been employed had collapsed. I saw no prospect of another situation in the only calling in which I had experience; and if I must try a new line I might as well cast it in America. I had some little savings, which my friends promised to augment when I saw a "really good thing."

Meanwhile I was to go across to spy out the land, to learn something of farming, and to fix on a place wherein to "squat."

I may frankly say that I did not like the prospect of "squatting" anywhere, for life on the lonely prairie had no charm for me. As I sailed West it was with no light heart, and with a very strong inclination to try my luck in the cities before taking a car-birth on the C. P. R. The Fates were to be kinder to me, however.

On landing at Quebec I ran against a bronzed and brawny man coming out of the post-office. Something about his face seemed familiar; but not until by the exchange of apologies we got into conversation, did I discover in this sun-burnt giant my old school-fellow, Jack Murray. I had not seen Jack for ten years, it is true; but still I knew he was in Canada, and there was less excuse for my non-

recognition than for his, seeing that I was supposed to be prospering at home. The truth is, we were both busy with our own affairs, and had each forgotten the other's existence. That did not make us the less glad to meet again, nor less friendly than of yore, when we did meet.

But I am not telling a story, and only mention this chance encounter to explain how it was that my destiny was altered. Jack, I found, was in the lumber trade, and when he learned how I loathed the prospect of farming, he proposed that I should join him. He was about to start for the upper provinces in his capacity of Ranger, to prepare for the season, and he proposed that I should go with him, and spend a winter among the lumberers, and then make up my mind whether to go in for timber or wheat.

Now as most young fellows who go out to Canada seem to think the choice of occupation is limited to farming, or ranching in the West, I have thought it will be of interest to place on record some notes about lumbering, gained by my own experience. As to the comparative merits of wood and wheat, from a pecuniary point of view, I shall say nothing, because I know nothing of farming. I have stuck to timber, having found it fairly remunerative, and more to my taste than prairie-grass.

It was the month of September when Jack and I started for the backwoods. Jack's duty—one which I now myself perform every year—was to select sites for the winter "shanties." This seems simple enough, but a forest-ranger in Canadian woods is also an explorer. He must select localities where the growing timber is most suitable for cutting; then he must exploit the whole district until he finds a spot near water adapted for the shanty. This shanty must be in a central position in the area to be worked, and the choice of a working area must be governed by the number and size of the streams into which the logs can be rolled, by the adaptability of the ground to haulage—roads for the winter work, and by a proper regard for the access of supplies during the long months of banishment which are to ensue.

By the time preliminaries are arranged, and sites marked off, the men begin to arrive. From forty to eighty men will have to be accommodated in one shanty, according to the amount of work within the selected area. The shanties are simply log-houses, which the men, by long ex-

perience, can very quickly run up. The material, of course, is all at hand. The walls are built of logs mortised into each other. The roofs are of cedar-logs, which are hollowed, and so placed that one set has the hollow turned up, and another set has the hollow turned down, dove-tailing, after a manner, into each other. There is no chimney; but in the centre of the roof there is a hole for the smoke. The inside arrangements are very simple, as chairs and tables are dispensed with—logs and stumps doing duty for both. Raised platforms run along the whole length of the walls, and on these the men sleep. The beds are hard, but so is their work; and they need no rocking.

Close to the shanties are built the stables, in the same manner. As a rule, the lumbermen do not bring or buy their horses, but hire them from the nearest farmers, who have no use for them during the winter, and who are always glad to make an extra profit in this way. A farmer who hires his team to the lumbermen, must send a driver with the horses, for the lumbermen take no risk with the animals. We pay so much per month per team, provide stabling, and board for driver and horses; but if there is any accident, that is the farmer's loss, and accidents do sometimes happen.

The men are divided into squads of hewers, log-makers, drivers, etc. Each set has its own particular work to do—hewers, for instance, making only square timber, log-makers only logs; and so on.

Each squad is under a foreman, who selects day by day the trees to be cut down, marks them in order, and puts two men to fell each tree.

When the tree is down, the foreman's duty is to measure it, and to mark it, to show the men how it has to be cut so as to get the greatest number of logs out of it. This marking, I need hardly say, requires trained experience, a correct eye, and good judgement. After the foreman has mapped out the logs, as it were, the sawyers then set to work with long cross-cut saws.

During the autumn and early winter the logs are usually left to lie where they are cut; but after the first winter-snows, a new work begins—that of making winter-roads. Along these the drivers keep hauling the logs all winter—for cutting is going on to add to the accumulations—to the banks of the streams, an abundance of which is indispensable to success in lumbering. The

logs are piled high up on the banks, and so arranged that, as soon as the ice melts, they may be easily canted over into the water. It is necessary to get all the logs to water before the ice breaks, and sleighing through the forest becomes impossible. In fact, with the first burst of spring, the forest-work is over.

But then begins the most difficult and anxious, and sometimes even dangerous, part of the lumberman's work. It is what is called "driving," and its successful completion depends on the skill and judgement of the foreman.

Each stream, it must be noted, has its working capacity. If you overcharge that you produce mischief, just as when you put too much pressure on a steam-boiler, or on your brain. It is the foreman's business to ascertain, or to gauge, the floating capacity of the stream he means to utilise to get his logs to mill. If the stream will only carry twenty thousand logs, and he rolls forty thousand, or fifty thousand, into it when the ice breaks, then he runs a strong chance of getting none down at all. In any case there will be a "jam" somewhere, and the greater portion of the logs will not get clear until the next season, while many of them may remain jammed for two or three seasons.

This is where the skilled lumberman has the advantage over the novice, and the reader can easily see what a difference must occur in the results to the employers. These are usually large merchants in Ottawa, Quebec, or Montreal, and, of course they have to find the money to pay men, and keep the shanties going all winter. I have known as many as a thousand men in the shanties of one firm alone, and all but the raw hands and under-strappers would be receiving from twenty to twenty-five dollars—say four to five pounds—per month, besides board. The foreman, of course, gets a great deal more, and a smart man at logging and driving can command high pay. Now, if by the miscalculation, or blunders of the "drivers," the streams are overloaded so that no logs can get down, all the immense outlay of the winter is locked up, for another year at least. That means a serious loss in a country where money is so "dear" as in Canada.

Yet "jams" happen often enough, in spite of all the care that is taken. But in the ordinary course, with the foreman carefully watching that the stream is kept fully employed without being overloaded, the

logs float down to the lakes or rapids, as the case may be, where they are caught in booms. Perhaps they reach a lake, or wide stretch of water, in which the current is slow. In that case they are surrounded with a boom of logs fastened with chains, and towed to the next current. This is a tedious job, and one that lumbermen try to avoid where possible.

Shooting the rapids with the logs is much more lively, but also much more dangerous. Men are kept constantly on the look-out at all rapids, to see that the water-way is kept clear, for a jam at such places is a very serious matter. Many a lumberman has lost his life in trying to prevent, or to break up, a "jam" at some foaming rapids.

Sometimes, the only way to break up a "jam" is to turn on more water at full pressure, and, for this purpose, lumber-firms keep reserves of water at critical places. These are formed by retaining dams. Again, in shallow rapids they have built slides, to which the logs are floated and shot down.

There is an immense amount of money engaged in the lumber trade, for all along the water-ways there is constant supervision and mechanical assistance needed. In the woods alone I suppose there will not be far short of twenty thousand men engaged every winter in cutting, driving, and preparing the timber for the streams.

On the lower waters "sorting booms" are placed at suitable places. In these the logs are collected, and then the lumberman comes and picks out his own by the marks. He then collects all his logs, and gets them into his own boom, where the process of manufacture into timber begins.

The process is this: The logs, as they are required, are hauled out of the water and up an incline into the mill, and set to the saws. The outside boards are the best, as being free from knots, and from four to six boards will be sawn off each side of the log, according to size. The centre of the log is usually full of knots, and is sawn in a different way. After being sawn, the boards are edged and cut to a uniform length by circular saws. Then they are piled up, according to size and quality, and left to dry. They are not fit for shipment until the following year.

Of course I did not learn all this in my first season with Jack Murray. What I learned with him was something about

"exploring," shanty-building, and tree-felling. The next year I went up as a log-maker; then I had a turn as hewer; next as "driver"; and now I am fully equipped as a foreman. By-and-by I shall start "shanties" of my own, no doubt. But we all have our castles in the air, as well as in the woods.

And now, how does a lumberman's life compare with a ranchman's, or a western farmer's? That I cannot tell; but I am not inclined to try a practical comparison. The life in the woods is a hard one, yet it is, to a healthy man, a most enjoyable one. Food is plentiful, if a trifle rough; and one's companions are not always what one could desire. But the glorious air, the magnificent trees, the grand aspects of Nature, the beauties and the teachings of the "forest primeval"—these are no mean advantages. Then in the shanties there are songs, and stories, and amusements of one sort and another to pass the long winter evenings pleasantly. Of course, in such a large and mixed company as there must necessarily be in each shanty, there is sure to be some black sheep; but, on the whole, the lumbermen are a superior lot, and will compare favourably with the western gentlemen immortalised in the pages of Bret Harte.

People at home do not realise the extent and wealth of the forests of Canada. Once upon a time—before lumbering became a regular trade—they extended in an unbroken line from the Atlantic shores to those of the head of Lake Superior, a distance of two thousand miles. In the north-west the plains are only thinly timbered; but on the slopes of the Rockies, right down to the Pacific shores, there are, again, hundreds of miles of trackless forest, which are still almost untouched. But in the neighbourhood of the St. Lawrence, the forests have been freely drawn upon ever since the French occupied the country.

In fact, the French made more use of the forest-wealth than we did at first; for, when Canada was ceded to England, the Baltic timber trade engaged a large portion of our shipping. It was not until the European disturbances, caused by Bonaparte, that our traders began to look upon North America as a better and more certain source of timber supply than the Baltic provinces. In the year 1800, only some two thousand six hundred loads—of fifty cubic feet each—were brought from North America to Great Britain. In 1850 the quantity was over a million loads, and

now it is about a million and a half loads annually. And that is not all, for Canada ships as much wood to the United States as she does to England, now that the pine lands of the north-eastern states have become depleted. The total exports of forest products of Canada are now over twenty-one millions of dollars annually. In the list of Canadian staples, timber is second only, and a good second, to agricultural produce.

This is what Mr. George Johnson, the Government Statistician at Ottawa, says about the timber industry: "In clearing the land of its primeval forest growth, the soil became amenable to culture; the lumberman was the first and best customer of the farmer; nay, he provided the farmers. The newly-arrived immigrant, in the majority of cases, possessed little or no capital, but immediately on his arrival in the country, he found regular and lucrative employment in the service of a lumberman. A few seasons' steady work afforded him the means of buying a lot of land; it gave him the knowledge of the woods, and hardiness to shift for himself, which are so essential to a new-comer placed in surroundings foreign to his past experience. Hence he was enabled to select a small location, and build his own dwelling, or shanty, without a stranger's help. When he had raised a small crop of hay, oats, and potatoes, he found a ready market at his door. When he was able to purchase a team of horses, he found employment for them during the winter months in hauling logs, and he had them for his farm work during the summer. Such, in brief, is the history of many a thriving farmer, or of his father, in Canada."

The lumbermen are the pioneers who have opened up Canada. First, clearing the land along the banks of the largest rivers, they have followed up every tributary stream that could float, or be made to float, a log in the spring freshets, until they have at last penetrated every nook of what at one time was a trackless, and impenetrable wilderness, hewing and constructing their roads, bridging and damming rivers, establishing depôts, which speedily developed into villages and towns, and, withal, contributing largely to the revenue of the country. One other advantage Canada owes to its timber trade, is the enormous increase of its mercantile marine, which ranks fourth among the maritime nations of the world.

All timber lands in Canada are under

the control of the Government of the Province in which they are situated, and the principal are in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec. There the lands are divided into "berths" of a certain number of square miles. These berths are put up to auction, and allotted to him who offers the highest bonus for cutting the timber within the limit. Besides this bonus, he has to pay a small fixed rental per square mile, and a royalty upon every cubic foot of squared and sawn timber. Nominally, the leases are for one year only; but, practically, the lumbermen are never disturbed so long as they pay their rents and dues.

In the Province of Quebec there are forty-one thousand, two hundred and sixty square miles; in the Province of Ontario, eighteen thousand square miles; and in New Brunswick, three thousand one hundred and twenty square miles of "lumber area," held under license from the respective Governments.

Ottawa, which is the seat of the Dominion Government, is also the great centre of the lumber trade, or, at least, such portion of it as finds an outlet by the Ottawa River and its tributaries. Around the Chaudiere Falls there are piling-grounds for the reception of lumber, where there is always a stock of timber, estimated at one hundred and twenty-five millions of cubic feet, waiting for the mills. Quite a number of these mills are clustered round the Falls, all fitted with the latest machinery, lighted by the electric light, and giving constant employment to more than a thousand men—all to work up the rough logs sent down by Jack Murray and his fellow-workers away in the depths of the "forest primeval."

YACHTING IN STILL WATERS.

SECOND SERIES.

IN FOUR PARTS. PART II.

FOR full five-and-twenty years Rowe's cheerful inn, at Lepe, gave hospitable shelter when your vessel had every prospect of lying hopelessly ashore on the mud for the next five or six hours. It refreshed an exhausted traveller; entertained cheery picnic parties who had come over drenched and starving from Cowes in Clarke's boat or a steam-launch; and provided absolute necessities for the neighbouring cottages. They had also charming lodgings, where

the same bonny children came year after year from London, and rejoiced in this healthy, lonely, uncontaminated spot. There is now neither shelter for man nor beast; it is all a thing of the past—"improved" off the face of the earth; and shut up all the year round, to the public—except when the kind and charitable family who own it are down for a brief season. It was from the now-perished causeway at Lepe that King Charles the First embarked—a captive—on his way to Carisbrooke Castle, Isle of Wight.

Just inland from the coastguard station—following the hard, white road—a rushy, damp meadow, generally bristling with unfriendly cattle, leads to a small spinney, where, during mid-spring, the ground under the tall pines is literally carpeted with a blue haze of wild hyacinths. The Cadland estate ends here, and the old Mitford property, now owned by Mr. Forster of Exbury, joins at the Dark Water, a little to the east of the coastguard station. In Gipsies' Lane—once a lovely shady walk, but periodically shorn and disfigured by the woodman, leading from the beach to Lepe Farm, and, indeed, everywhere nearly about here—the blackberries are remarkably fine; but the hedgers and ditchers have a heartrending way of coming with their billhooks about the first of September and slashing off the heads of all the luxuriant shoots laden with the glorious promise of autumn, to "clear up a bit," as they explain; but really to ruin the crop and rob the children.

Several quiet country lanes—in which you will not probably see a single soul, except the poor little weary coastguard children returning tired from the long walk to school at Exbury—lead to Inchmerry, Lepe Farm, and Lower Exbury; but the hedges are low, with few trees and little shade. Here and there a great patch of sombre wood, well preserved, and, therefore, inaccessible, invites to repose, and yet repels, by fierce warnings to trespassers and all such ill-conditioned persons. Large breadths of carefully-cultivated and well-fenced fields stretch away for miles and miles, dotted with cattle of all colours and sizes. A general aspect of well-to-do farming shows that here are no starving tenantry or struggling farmers; but that the Exbury property, like the Cadland, has a careful and prosperous owner, with the welfare of all who serve under them at heart, not only willing, but able to keep the wolf from the door.

To sail up the Beaulieu river, a flowing tide should be taken, so that, if you do stick, it will be only a question of half an hour or so; a not unnecessary precaution, inasmuch as, with a wide stretch of mud covered with shallow water, a novice would find it most difficult to keep to the channel. On the right bank, Inchmerry House quickly opens to view, in a peculiarly lonely position. A comfortable house, surrounded with deep verandahs and sparsely clothed by gnarled old wind-bent pines, blown into weird, fantastic shapes by the strong prevalence of south-west winds, would appear, to a gay member of society, as a most undesirable home: many miles from shop, town, railway, or doctor. Only those independent of those supposed necessities of life would think of living here.

Further on, still on the right bank, the Solent brick-works are the reverse of picturesque, and offend the olfactory nerves. A well-staked passage leads up to the stage for shipping bricks, and must not be mistaken for the main channel, which branches to the left. At high water, a short cut to the Solent for shallow craft is found through Needsoar Creek, but requires good local knowledge to avoid being planted on the soft mud.

Beaulieu coastguard station stands on a bare, flat beach, treeless and bleak, fronting Cowes, and appears to be needlessly close both to that at Lepe and Pitt's Deep; but in the old smuggling days this part of the coast was a favourite landing-place in the dark winter nights for the French luggers, which landed many a valuable cargo in safety hereabouts. A winding, but very shallow creek leads to the station; but it will not repay the risk of being planted in the mud, except to visit the most desolate and un-get-at-able coastguard station in England. Not a blade of grass or a plant in view, till, gradually nearing Ginn's Farm, a faint attempt at cultivation begins to assert itself. School is a great difficulty with the poor children, who have to be conveyed from here to Gilbury Hard in a boat, from whence they make their way to Exbury.

Ginn's Farm, a well-built, comfortable homestead, as are all the buildings on the Duke of Buccleugh's Beaulieu property, used to be celebrated for cream, butter, and eggs; but the keen salt winds sweeping over this bare spit, stints the grass, and makes stock-keeping a difficulty, and it has therefore been given up. About half a

mile inland of Ginn's Farm, by way of an excellent hard road, are the vast, ivy-covered ruins of St. Leonard's Abbey, now converted into barns for farm use; which we shall reach from Buckler's Hard later on.

Lord Montagu's oyster beds, on the stretch of shallow water between the brick-works and the Point at Lower Exbury, do not fail to claim our notice, owing to the warning board conspicuously placed on the edge of the mud. There was a great fall of spat four years ago, which, it is to be hoped, will make oysters as plentiful and cheap as they were formerly. Quiet as the Beaulieu river is, it is said not to be quiet enough, owing to the presence of steam-launches in the summer time.

After passing Ginn's Farm, where landing is only to be found up a winding creek, when the tide is pretty high, a lovely view opens out. On the right each moment reveals a new prospect of the fine old trees and picturesque farm of Lower Exbury, framed in its drooping elms; now a tall old chimney, now a red roof, lichen-stained, now the cool, open door, with great milk tins standing outside to sweeten. As we glide by, all in turn are revealed nestling among short green turf, sloping away to the river's bank. Excellent butter, poultry, and eggs, produced at this farm, are to be got at the post-office, Exbury. A little inland of Lower Exbury, a peep may be obtained, on several bearings, of Three Stone Farm, where eggs fresher than the freshest can be got. A really new laid egg—such a luxury when away cruising—is not at all understood by English people in general, whose farm produce is generally sent to market once a week. But an egg hot out of the nest, with a soft white bloom upon it, transparent and pink when held to the light, like a ripe silk-worm; an egg, that when lightly boiled, looks like curdled cream, is a joy undreamed of by ordinary country people. If, on the contrary, when held up to a strong light, small black specks are visible in the pores of the shell, that egg is stale; if faint bluish stains meander under the shell, it is staler. It is quite curious how mendacious people, otherwise the soul of honour, can be about the age of eggs.

The tenant of Three Stone Farm also churns her cream before it has turned into a rank, stodgy, unwholesome mass of corruption, in which condition it is too often put into the churn to be converted into fresh butter, save the mark! and con-

sequently her butter, like her eggs, is beyond suspicion. When away from civilisation, the knowledge of where one's daily bread and butter can be got is often a boon. Chickens also, nice, white, sweet-smelling little birds, which can be cooked to perfection in the Dutch oven on board, are also procurable at Three Stone Farm.

While we have been wandering afield among the butter and eggs, the yacht has been turning up the river in short tacks, often shaving the mud by a hair's breadth. The wind seems generally down the river somehow, and as the available space between the mud-banks is remarkably small, a vessel must be very handy, or grounding is of constant occurrence. A fine clump of stone-pine, with straight, rough, red stems, and dense black-green foliage, marks the commencement of Exbury Woods, where are to be found some of the finest specimens now existing of the Californian Conifers—Wellingtonia, Deodar, Cupressus Lambertini, Lawsonia, and Macrocarpi. Also magnificent cypress trees, some of which have been so surrounded from youth upward by belts of protecting trees, that they have grown up absolutely perfect in shape, without a branch missing or distorted; but others, again, have been ruined by want of attention in youth. Gilbury Hard and three pair of moorings are now in full view, and nothing lying at them, so down mainsail and jib, and we quietly glide up to the "Bittern's" buoy, and take it in. Scarcely has our mainsail been furled and coated, the jib rolled into a sausage, and put away in the sail room, deck generally tidied up a bit, and the galley fire lit, when Mrs. Foster's fine, wholesome steam-launch, "Forest Fly," comes whisking round the point, with the little racing hook-nose cutter, "Curtsey," in tow, and fourteen racing flags fluttering from her lofty topmast head down to the deck. She looked like a drowned rat, for the weather had been very bad outside, on the previous day's race at Yarmouth, and she had almost lived under water, coming up now and then to breathe. The pair also take in their buoys, and are "nice company," as our skipper remarks, when going to visit each in turn during the evening in the dinghey, to "pass the time of day." A more lovely, secluded nook exists not in all England than this anchorage, landlocked on all sides, the Exbury pines, with a neat-keeper's lodge, boathouse, and landing on

one hand. The winding river flowing seaward; the high downs on the Isle of Wight filling up the gap; the point at Buckler's Hard, where gnarled, twisted old oaks grow down to the very water's edge, whose wide spreading branches give shade and shelter to rough little ponies and sleek cattle; the primitive old world village of Buckler's Hard, crowning a lovely slope of short green turf; and beyond, the gleaming silver river, backed by miles and miles of the lonely old Beaulieu Woods stretching away to the New Forest, complete a panorama of singular beauty.

While contemplating with quiet restfulness, in the shelter of the well, our picturesque surroundings, an odour faint but savoury—it might be roast chicken and creamy bread sauce—came stealing into the air. "D-d-dinner is ready, sir," is ever a welcome sound, when lying motionless after a long day's sailing, and Gracie, who dines with the quality on these occasions, responds with the gayest alacrity, though on shore her appetite is of the faintest, after which we sit on deck till the sweet summer night falls.

"What do you think about our stay-light, R.?" suggests the head of the family.

"Nothing won't run into we, this time o' night, sir," responds the careful skipper; "leastways, they didn't ought, there ain't nothin' as is likely to be on the move afore mornin'," so the subject falls into abeyance.

This place suits the quiet skipper, who, though not averse to congenial society, likes plenty of room and no crowding. "The best time to go a-pleasuring," he remarks, "is when no one else don't go." In a general way this sort of pleasuring sounds lonely; but I entirely agree with him that a crowd is detestable, and the one who is your second self is really no one else.

With gathering twilight the rooks come home, apparently having had a "good time" far away among the Hampshire stubble-fields, for they croak to each other in a weary, contented manner, as they heavily fly homewards. For half an hour and more, great wedge-shaped flights ceaselessly pass over our heads, bound to the dense pine woods of Beaulieu. It is nearly dark before the last one is home, for bringing up the rear are the tired stragglers, maimed, halt, and blind, who, though but poor creatures, have no idea of being left behind when any fun is to be had, and while there is life in them. We are told in the book of Job that "There is a path

that no fowl knoweth, and the vulture's eye hath not seen." Rooks, perhaps, would have been excepted, could Job have known their habits, for they are as nearly human in their business, loves, joys, sorrows, quarrels, and knowledge of geography, as we are.

The Beaulieu swans, too, who have been floating majestically round us, eagerly on the watch for morsels of food thrown to them, flap their wings, producing a loud noise like the sound of a horse trotting on a hard highway, and with discordant cries, as of an agonised farewell, rise toilsomely from the river's bosom, and fly home to their nests among the bulrushes, yellow flags, and tall flowering grasses, in the lonely reaches below Beaulieu, or in the upper waters above the Palace, where the river creeps along, narrowing into a reedy swamp, miles away, on the rolling heath towards the New Forest.

Night falls at Exbury sooner than in the outer world, so shut in as it is by great forests; the placid water becomes crimson, reflected from the clouds; the great pines and oaks turn into black masses, standing out sharp against the yellow sky; then all the different hues melt into one deep, neutral tint, and night covers all. With gathering darkness a deep stillness settles down upon the lonely river, broken only by the bittern's hooting cry and the frog's croak from the reed-grown marshes. Only Nature's sweet sounds come to us over the quiet water, lapping in little ripples the low sedge banks. The water-hen and coot are fidgety and troubled in their mouldy nests, because their sworn foe, the gaunt old water-rat, is out on the war-trail, and seldom returns without a shrieking victim. Across the river, a few twinkling lights from the cottages at Buckler's Hard grow fainter, and then die out as the night wears on.

The wearied farm-labourers, pulling down from Ginn's to their home at Buckler's Hard, glide past us, their harsh, spasmodic voices piercing the still air, and keeping up a continual stream of nothings, till passed by out of hearing. And now advancing, now lost behind the steep mud-banks, the laborious puffing and fizzing of a steam-launch is heard, apparently passing down the Solent. Suddenly the sound dies away, then abruptly ceases, and all is still.

Our skipper, whose eyes and ears are ever on the alert, puts his pipe away, and, rising, looks out keenly to seaward. Again

the sound is heard, this time certainly nearer, once more to die away to nothingness. A third time, and yet nearer; till at last, round the windings of the river, and close upon us, we plainly see a moving light towing a towering mass. The skipper now dives below, reappearing instantly with our stay-light.

"Lord Henry's yacht, sir!" he says, excitedly, "and we must clear out. Well, no one wouldn't think as he could get up so far this time o' night. But there, he knows his way if he was blindfold."

In a twinkling we let fall the buoy and chain with a great splash, and drop down a little, when our own anchor is let go, and we bring up out of the way, hoist our stay-light, and watch at leisure the clever steam-launch bringing the sailing yawl to her moorings. How she made her way safely up through all the tortuous windings of the river, with not a glimmer of light to show the booms, was indeed astonishing, and could only be achieved after a lifetime's practice. Moorings on board, the merry picnic party of servants from the Palace, who had been belated outside by the tide, pulled ashore to Buckler's Hard, from whence they drove to Beaulieu.

Our principal reason in coming here was to make expeditions to various points of interest in the neighbourhood. After a peaceful night, a good breakfast might reasonably be expected, all our surroundings being favourable. Fresh cream, eggs, and butter from the dairy at Exbury, with new bread, and Hampshire bacon, were all promising; but breakfast is the precise moment selected by the many wasps, indigenous here, to swarm into the cabin and commence the attack. After enduring their particular attentions more or less good-humouredly, we are reduced to banging about the cabin with a duster, and then shutting up windows and hatch till the meal is over.

Landing on a microscopic spot of shingly beach, at Buckler's Hard, close beside the "Bittern's" winter bed, the rotting remains of old ships and cradles, revealed at dead low water, remind one that a hundred and twenty years ago men-of-war of good size were built here for the navy from the tough slow-grown oaks of Beaulieu; and excellent seamen there must have been in those days, who could launch a vessel of many hundred tons in this confined space. The village is most interesting and picturesque, belonging entirely to Lord Henry Scott,

now Lord Montagu, of Beaulieu, with absolutely no interests outside those of the Duke of Buccleugh. No ale-house sullies the morals of these Arcadian folk; but neither is there any church, Beaulieu or Exbury being the nearest place of worship. The village consists of two rows of closely-built cottages, two and three storeys high, divided by a wide, smooth space, covered thickly with most lovely, short, green turf, and fenced at the end from the incursions of animals by a stout, low, black paling, with a gate in the middle. Each house is a picture in itself, with its deep slanting roof and peaked gables.

ONE NIGHT IN THE BUSH.

A COMPLETE STORY.

THERE could be no doubt about it any longer—I had lost my way in the Bush. The faint wheel-marks, which for the last two miles had served me for a track, had suddenly vanished altogether. They had been difficult enough to follow in the failing light; once lost, it was impossible to find them again. I hunted diligently, but I hunted in vain. Nor did I quite abandon the search until the darkness was complete; and by that time my mare was so obviously knocked up, that I dismounted and led her.

It was an unpleasant predicament, of course. There was, however, no real danger in the situation. I was in no uninhabited region; I was within seventy miles, in a north-eastern direction, of Melbourne—the Melbourne of to-day. The district abounded in small holdings and free selections. Supper and a blanket, in some small homestead, were merely a question of time. All I had to do was to bear steadily in one direction, and I should most certainly strike some fence within a mile or two. By following the first fence I came to, sooner or later I must reach a gate. There I should find a track of some sort, and the track would lead me to a house, and I should be all right. A little patience was all that was required; nothing more. I had been riding all day, so that it was rather an agreeable change than otherwise to get off and walk for a while. In any case, I pushed on cheerfully enough, to begin with.

It was a cold night in late autumn. The white stars froze in a clear, slaty sky. Rain had fallen heavily early in the week, and the grass under foot was still very

wet. I wore thin, side-spring boots, of a pattern much in vogue in the Bush; they are nice light boots to ride in, but if you walk in them through wet grass they let in the moisture at once; so, of course, my feet became wet and cold. This naturally interfered with my good spirits. But it was not until I descended from the broken, sparsely-timbered, airy country, in which I had dismounted, into a low-lying and dismal forest of dead gum-trees, that I became positively dispirited.

These weird woodlands are only too common in Victoria. The trees remain standing after death; the smaller branches fall away with the leaves, but the principal limbs are left, to grow white and smooth as dead men's bones, to overhang you threateningly as you ride, or to point skywards in silent imprecation. Silence and the scent of slow decay are in their midst. The winds of heaven draw but hoarse groans from the swaying skeletons—they know not the softer tones of living trees. The impression upon the imagination is that of a vast chamber of gigantic spectres—a kind of grotesque sylvan Valhalla. The effect upon the mind is depressing in broad daylight; but at night, if you are at all nervous, it is little short of terrifying. I am not exactly nervous; but I confess to at least one inward shudder as I dragged my tired mare through the horrible place. I own that I was thankful to get out of it.

I was still more thankful, however, when at last I actually struck the fence which I had made sure of finding sooner or later. But my good fortune was only beginning. I had followed the fence barely a hundred yards when I descried a light, dim and far-away through the trees on the other side of the fence; but an unmistakeable light.

The fence was of brushwood. I succeeded in finding a low place, which I did not scruple to make lower still, and then I contrived to get the mare across. Then I remounted, seeing that the end was near, and pressed on towards the light as eagerly as you please. Ten minutes ago I had been full of misgiving, which, no doubt, was liable to return any moment; but now, at any rate, I thought only of the light, and of the cheer that awaited me beyond the light.

I did not know at all where I was. Very possibly that light was within no great distance of the township which was my proper destination; in that case I

should, of course, push on without delay. But unless it was a really short distance, I knew that it would be beyond the present powers of my exhausted hack. There would then be nothing for it but to spend the night at the homestead that showed this kindly light. Nor would there be anything out-of-the-way in that; for, in the Bush, hospitality is sought and dispensed pretty much as a matter of course; and, for my part, I was not in the mood to refuse anybody's hospitality that night. In anticipation I accepted it gratefully, watching the light. That light, I dared swear, sprang from a grand log-fire roaring up a great, square, wooden chimney. I enjoyed the cheerful scene in advance. I warmed myself at the fire, and listened to the welcome hissing of boiling water in the "billy." I am a young man still; I was a very young man then, and proportionately sanguine; but if there was one thing of which I had a right to be cocksure, it was a traveller's welcome in the Bush.

When, however, I came close enough to my guiding light to frame it in the square outline of a window, either the fire within had burnt low or I had over-estimated its quality in my first elation on beholding it. The light was dim, but steady. No doubt, then, that I had misjudged its quality; it was probably mere lamplight after all.

I now struck a picket-fence, which I followed until I came to the gate. As I opened the gate, the inevitable chorus of barking dogs burst forth. I made out the dark outline of a long, low roof against the star-lit sky. I rode up to the verandah. A man's voice was quieting the dogs. I could not distinguish the man himself; he did not come directly between me and the dim square of the window, or the flood of faint light that proceeded from a door newly opened; and the rest of the verandah was in deep darkness. I rode up quite close to the verandah before speaking.

"Am I far from the township?" I then asked.

There was a somewhat chilling silence; and no movement in the verandah, though I knew there was some one there. At length a hard, metallic voice answered me.

"What township?"

I gave the township its name. The same unaccountable pause preceded the reply.

"You are seven miles from there."

The tones were monotonous as well as

metallic. Seeing that the talking was to be all on one side, I hastened to explain my position.

"I have been off the track since sundown. About sundown I was shown a short cut by a drover, and this is the result of taking it. It was an old, faint, disused track, and impossible to follow after dark. If I hadn't been fool enough to take his advice, but had only stuck to the main road, I should have been in the township before now. As it is, here I am, with my mare dead beat. She isn't mine either; I am taking her down to Melbourne for a man. We have come from close to Euroa to-day, and she's just off the grass, and a bit soft. She cannot possibly travel seven more miles; while, as for me, I'm famishing."

I spoke impulsively; but I was really very hungry as well as chilled to the bone. There should have been but one answer possible, and that a ready one. To my surprise and vexation there was no answer at all, but an even longer pause than before. I broke the silence myself this time, and abruptly.

"Will you kindly tell me where I can get accommodation?"

Promptly, by comparison, I received the cheering information that there was no place but that. And there was not the faintest accent of invitation in the strange cold, even tones.

"Then," said I, with excusable warmth, considering the customary treatment of strangers in the Bush, "I see that I am to camp out under some gum-tree. Perhaps, at any rate, you are open to a bargain for something to eat and drink?"

"Let me think; you want accommodation for man and horse," said the voice, very slowly, as though the man were trying hard to realise the inconceivable. "You want accommodation—in my house."

"Not necessarily in your house," I took him up, shortly. "I want nothing that is not willingly given, and nothing that I cannot pay for."

"But—let me think; you might not want to go away first thing in the morning; and, if you did not go away first thing—"

"Thanks! that's quite sufficient," I said. "I'll trouble you no further. I'll go away now, this moment, if I have to walk every inch of the seven miles."

A short, square figure stepped down from the dark verandah, a hand grasped my bridle. "You will do nothing of the kind!"

"What do you mean?" I said, angrily.

"What I say: you will do nothing of the kind; you will stop, and put up with the best I can give you. It is not much; but you shall have it. Get off. I'll take your horse to the stable."

Hospitality at last—in the mere words. There was none in the voice. The voice was unaltered.

As I dismounted, the man turned from me, crossed the verandah, entered the dimly-outlined door, and returned with a kerosene lamp in his hands. The window and the door were now both invisible. The lamp, then, had been the only light after all—there was no fire. Yet I had distinctly heard the man exchange words with some one when he went to fetch the lamp. That person, whoever it was, was now left in total darkness. This seemed odd—but not more odd than that two people should be sitting up without a fire on such an exceedingly cold night. I followed my host to the stable, still more puzzled.

In the stable, he bid me hold the lamp, observing that he would soon make all snug for the mare. He was as good as his word; he stripped her of everything, gave her the best stall, brought her water in a bucket, and a first-rate feed of chaff and oats, all of which he did with his own hands, with a slow deliberation, more like mechanical action than mere "pottering," and without speaking a word. Meanwhile, I held the lamp in several positions, each of which facilitated a separate scrutiny of my host's face, I examined my strange, silent host from several different points of view. I had seen outside that he was short, and compactly built; but his voice, hard and strange though it was, had sounded to my ears like the voice of middle age; whereas I now perceived that the man was an old man—sixty, or thereabouts. His beard was grey and flowing, and the furrows upon his fallow face were worn deep by time. His features struck me as thin and sharp—unnaturally so, for he was by no means a thin man; but rather thick-set. His eyes, however, I remember best. Indeed, I shall never forget them. There was a most strange expression in his pale blue eyes. It was a wild, far-away, distracted expression, like the eyes of madness; it was a still and stony expression—like the eyes of the dead. There was nothing positively disagreeable in the cold, hard eye; there had been nothing absolutely

unpleasant in the hard, cold tones; but there was something that I did not like in the combination of the two.

We returned to the front of the house. Front and back the house was now in complete darkness. Apart from the darkness, it seemed to me that a palpable gloom enveloped the premises. We crossed the verandah, and then the threshold of a long and lofty room, in which, the light of the lamp we carried, after striking upwards upon the rafters, seemed to lose itself in a starless sky. And to me the room seemed colder than the open air. Before the hearth knelt a woman. I saw at once that the miserable task that engaged her was an attempt to resuscitate a fire which had scarcely a spark of life remaining. She turned her head as we entered, and then I saw that her face was white and wan. Then she bent forward again to her forlorn task.

Nothing was said. The man placed the lamp upon a bare wooden table in the centre, and sat down without a word upon an old horse-hair settle on the farther side of the table.

The silence was intolerable. I, at least, found it so. I went over to the woman and offered to make up the fire for her. Immediately she rose, with a slow, languid movement, and I knelt down. The ashes were cold as well as white, and beyond resurrection; so I asked for fresh wood, and when the young woman fetched it I quickly kindled the fire. The fire was blazing famously, and roaring up the great square wooden chimney, when I got up from my knees.

Already I discovered a slight change in the melancholy countenances of my entertainers. They were watching the fire, the woman standing, the man from his seat on the settle. There was—though small indeed—yet a perceptible increment of intelligence in the man's dull gaze; and the wretchedness in his companion's pale face was less starkly conspicuous. Whatever might be the reason of their profound gloom, the fire was evidently warming their hearts. This impression was confirmed when the woman suddenly turned her back upon it and went swiftly—even hastily—to a cupboard, from which she produced tea-things; and when the old man opened his lips and exclaimed, "Tea!" there was in that commonplace monosyllable a human ring which I welcomed even more than the material blessing which the word promised. I had almost

forgotten my hunger during the few minutes I had spent in that cold, sepulchral room. But now the room was gradually warming, and so, it seemed, were the people. I even conversed with the woman while she made the tea.

She was young, evidently the old man's daughter, though her eyes were dark. But for the extreme pallor of her face, and its haggard contour, she might have been handsome. And she talked to me amiably, making a desperate effort to seem cheerful, though grief was always in her voice. I tried also to draw the old man into the conversation; but all to no purpose. He took the tea that was handed to him and drank it eagerly, but after that he relapsed into his former condition. The firelight somewhat softened his hard, fixed glance; but that was all. Indeed, it became more and more a vacant stare, until it decided me as to what the old man's condition really was.

"Mad!" I said to myself. "Melancholy mad, perhaps. Harmless in any case; but mad! No wonder the girl looks sad, and wan, and old beyond her years, with such a charge as this! But, to be sure, she cannot be entirely alone with him; there must be some one who looks after the selection."

And so there was. I was finishing a hearty and orthodox meal of mutton and damper, when a heavy tread sounded in the verandah, and a young man entered. It was at once plain that the new-comer and the girl were brother and sister. They had the same dark eyes and hair; they had also the same pallor, and a common sadness of expression. The brother appeared to be the younger of the two. I could not help seeing glances pass between them, and the young man nod in answer to some understood question. A few brief undertones also passed, and he and I exchanged nods. The old man, however, took no notice of his son; still sitting on the horse-hair settle, his hands resting upon his knees, his head somewhat bent, and his eyes fastened steadfastly upon the glowing logs, he did not even turn his head, or give any indication that he was aware of a new arrival. I had no need to watch the sad expressive glances of his children, to become more and more fully persuaded that the old man was a lunatic.

The young man sat down near the fire, dejectedly enough, and immediately pulled off his boots. He had the appearance of a man who has walked far. I asked him if

this was the case, and he told me that he had walked from the township, seven miles off. He spoke in a hushed, mysterious tone; but this did not puzzle me. No new peculiarity of this unfortunate family could puzzle me now. Presently, he enquired how I had come there, and I told him.

"He put up your horse for you?" whispered the young man, nodding towards his father.

"Yes," I said, and he asked no more. But I saw him gazing intently at his father's face, while compassion filled his own.

I looked also, and the old man's position was quite unchanged. His strange, settled stare might perhaps have been mistaken for profound reverie; but not for long; to watch him for any length of time was to rest assured that behind those pale, vacant, passionless eyes the rational faculty had ceased to exist.

We sat smoking in gloomy silence, the son and I; the daughter, I imagined, had retired for the night—when she presently reappeared. She had been preparing a room for me it seemed, for, pointing to an open door, exactly opposite the door that opened upon the verandah, she said that my room was ready. There was another door on the same side of the room—the back of the horse-hair settle just filling the space of wall between the two—which probably led into another bedroom; but it was shut. A fourth door communicated with a passage. I protested that a blanket in any odd corner would have been sufficient for my needs, and apologised for the evident trouble I had given; but the girl did not hear me. Stooping over the old man, she had thrown one arm tenderly around his neck, and was whispering to him in soft, wheedling tones, such as one might use with a sick and self-willed child. Her words did not reach me. Neither did the old man seem to hear them, for he did not even raise his eyes; and the son, looking up, said gently:

"Leave him be, Molly. It's no use. He will go when he's tired out; not before."

Clearly, they wanted the poor man to go to bed, and he would not. I saw tears in the dark eyes of the girl as she turned away, and slowly left the room.

Again we sat without speaking. Fire and lamp burned low together. The aggressive ticking of a noisy little American clock alone broke the silence of the room; it seemed noisy and aggressive now, though

I had not noticed it before; so I suppose this silence was the longest and most profound of all. For the first time I glanced up to the chimney-piece and read the face of the clock. I could scarcely believe my eyes! I would have guessed the time was between ten and eleven; it was between twelve and one! I must have been much longer at fault among the gum-trees than I had supposed; it must have been nearly eleven when I saw the light. Then how strange that there should have been a light to see at that hour! How strange that, in the Bush, where people are commonly abed by ten at latest, I should have found these people sitting up at eleven, in the cold, without a fire! And how strange that the son should return from such a long walk only at midnight, when no doubt his morning's work began before daybreak! This, indeed, was the strangest part of the business, for the madman was not concerned in it; and I had no reason as yet to suppose that the son was less sane than I was. Mystified, in spite of my determination to be mystified no longer on discovering that there was insanity in the house, I rose, saying that I would turn in.

My companion knocked the ashes from his pipe and rose too.

"I will do the same—after one more try to get him to go."

He stood before the old man as he spoke and laid his two hands upon the other's shoulders, and cried in a tone so loud, comparatively—though, in fact, not loud at all—that to my ears it sounded as out of place in that room as in an empty chancel:

"Father! father!"

The old man slowly raised his eyes.

"Do go to bed, father."

The old man shook his head slowly and dropped his eyes, only to raise them again with a gleam of interest sudden and surprising.

"Say! did you see to that?"

"Yes, father."

"And they're coming in the morning?"

"Yes, father."

"First thing?"

"First thing in the morning."

"Ah," said the old man, looking towards me; "he's going first thing. Good!"

"Then, you'll go to bed?" persisted the son.

No. It was clear he would do no such thing. The young man gave in with a heavy sigh.

"It's of no earthly use. He must just

be left. When he's tired out he will go of his own accord, and sleep. Come, and I'll show you your room."

I followed him through the open door. The room was small, but better furnished than are the rooms in many more pretentious homesteads. The bed—which did not stand out into the room (a narrow room) but hugged the inner wall—looked downright thrilling in its snowy purity. I had been prepared for no such luxurious accommodation, and I bluntly said so, though it was to the son of the house. He smiled and seemed pleased, as though I had expressed appreciation of a family trait of which the family were justly proud.

"My mother—" he began; but the smile faded from his face, and he stood distressed and silent.

"Your mother—?" I thoughtlessly took him up.

"Is dead!" he said, hastily; and before I could stammer an apology he was gone.

Well, of all the sad homes I had ever entered, this was the saddest: one parent dead, one of unsound mind! No wonder the children were silent, and sad, and morbid.

And the son, at any rate, was morbid. How else could one account for a grown man leaving one so abruptly at the mere mention of a dead parent? He had not even shut the door. In shutting it myself I could not resist peering once more into the outer room. The lamps were growing very dim; the room was again beginning to lose warmth, for the fire was almost out; but, sitting in his old attitude upon the settle, within a yard of my door, I could still distinguish the motionless outline of the melancholy madman; and, by the bend of his grey head, which was turned from me, I knew that he was still staring vacantly at the dying glow. And he was alone in the room.

Very gently I closed the door; but I got into bed with a thoroughly uneasy feeling. To state it mildly, I was among queer people. My host was mad. For all I knew, his children were tainted with incipient madness. It was a harmless mania, perhaps; but there could be no sense of complete security in lying down in the house of a lunatic, however harmless. I lay down without a proper feeling of gratitude in my breast for having a bed to lie upon at all, and not the damp grass among the gum-trees. This was the least that was due from me, yet I felt utterly ungrateful. Cold and dispirited, and not

a little nervous, I closed my eyes, longing for nothing so much as to open them and find daylight creeping into the room.

I do not know how long I slept without dreaming. I have no idea how long I dreamt before waking. They say that our most elaborate dreams are the creation of little more than a moment—the moment before waking. If that be so, a moment is enough to force perspiration from the forehead, to shake the bones in their sockets, to set the teeth chattering in one's head. For I awoke to all these sensations.

I had been out in the night in a spectral forest, where all the trees were white and ghastly and glittering in the starlight with the dew of death. They raised their lean arms high into the starry sky, and ranged themselves in fearful groups around me, pointing at me with skeleton fingers, as though resenting the presence of a living creature in their dead world. And all was still—still as death; and silent—silent as the tomb. But no: a night wind springing up suddenly broke the dread silence. I heard it sighing among the live trees afar off, and the great dead branches around me groaned as they swung among the stars. The sighing came nearer; the groaning grew louder. I awoke. And, waking, I heard human sighs and human groans not far from my ears.

I lay for some minutes unable to breathe or to think; but only to listen—to the formless utterances of a man's anguish.

In terror I turned my face to the wall; it was from that direction the sounds proceeded. The wall was merely a wooden partition. Dim streaks of yellow light penetrated it in more places than one; but six inches from my face, there was a bright, conspicuous spot of the size of a shilling. With the rapid perception of extreme terror, I saw directly that this spot of light must arise from there being a hole in the partition—probably from the removal of a knot—and that the sounds I heard came from the next room. To realise this was to place my eye to the hole without an instant's thought. Never shall I forget what I then saw.

First I saw a lamp—the kerosene lamp that had guided me to this horrible place; and, in the full light of the lamp, was the face of my host, the silent, motionless madman of the evening. There was no madness in his looks now; only grief. There was no longer any vacancy in the pale, blue eyes; they were soft and sorrowful now, and moist with tears, and they were

gazing tenderly at something—something immediately between my eyes and his, if I but lowered my glance.

I did lower my glance; and the thing I saw I shall remember to my own dying day. It was the rigid profile of a corpse!

How long I gazed in horrid fascination, I know not. I was very young. I had actually never before beheld death. Why I did not shriek aloud, why no cry of any kind rose to my lips from my parched throat is to me inexplicable. I only know that I did gaze until I gradually became calm; and that at length I fell heavily back upon my pillows.

Not that I lost consciousness; on the contrary, my brain became desperately busy. All that had mystified me was plain now, and plain in its true light; not in the light of my false theory of madness: the hesitation to take me in; the cold and discomfort within; the silence and sad looks of the young woman; the late hours; the son's errand to the township and his strange emotion at the mere mention of his mother—his mother, who lay newly dead in the next room! All these things I understood now. And I had mistaken the first stupor of grief for complete insanity! Well, there was nothing to marvel at now—nothing but the self-effacing charity which would not deny me entrance even though death and desolation had entered just before me; nothing but the self-command and the extraordinary consideration for another that had kept the secret which would have driven me from the shelter of this roof if divulged. These things I have marvelled at ever since.

As I lay, turning the matter over and over in my mind, it seemed to me that I could only repay the hospitality of these sorrow-stricken people in one way: by getting up quietly and stealing away from the homestead without their knowing it. Grey dawn was already creeping into the room. The little circle of light was no longer visible in the partition. At last, then, the old man had considered the prayers of his children, and sought rest and sleep. I rose and dressed, and went softly out. I had no difficulty in finding the stable or in saddling the mare. I had mounted, and was riding round by the front of the house—the way I had come—when a bowed figure stepped down from the verandah and laid a hand upon my bridle, for the second time, for it was my host himself. At a glance, he was shrunk, bowed, broken, and in his right mind.

"You have found it out!" he said, sadly; and his voice was soft enough now.

"Yes," I said gravely. "Heaven forgive me for having added to your load this night!"

I wrung his hand.

"No, no, no!" said the old man, simply. "Don't say that. I never thought you would find it out. I don't know how you did find it out. But I wasn't up to thinking at all. Somehow, I wasn't myself last night. I don't quite know what passed, and that's the truth."

"When—when did it happen?"

"Not long before you came. I can't say to an hour, for—you see—I was dazed. That's just about what I was."

"Yet you took me in!"

"That was nothing. I only wish—you had gone as you came, without knowing!"

"Good-bye," I said.

I could say nothing better for the life of me. I wrung his hand again.

"So long," said my host.

And so—I rode away.

KESTELL OF GREYSTONE.

A SERIAL STORY.

By ESMÈ STUART.

Author of "*Muriel's Marriage*," "*Joan Vellacot*," "*A Faivre Damzell*," etc., etc.

CHAPTER LVII. A MEETING ON THE MOOR.

MORE than a year has gone by. And a year makes a great change even in a country lane to those who have observant eyes. Nature works miracles by following her own infinitesimal laws. And why should the kingdom of the spiritual world be less marvellous?

The strange events that took place at quiet Rushbrook are still occasionally talked about, because anything out of the ordinary is welcome to the country mind.

Mr. Kestell's sudden death, of course, put the wedding beyond the range of possibilities; and as Walter Akister only once returned to Rushbrook, and then emigrated, the idea of his again acting the part of a bridegroom was out of the question. Besides, it was known as an open secret that Elva utterly rejected the idea of fulfilling her engagement.

Mr. Kestell's will excited immense interest, for the amount of his riches had been a staple subject of conversation. There was much talk about a last will, but as no last will was ever found, the one before the last stood valid; and the curious

public were overjoyed to find that Kestell of Greystone died a rich man, though not quite so fabulously wealthy as he had been said to be.

He left large sums to charity, which George Guthrie said was a thousand pities, as it was a bad example to other rich men not to give in their lifetime; though certainly Mr. Kestell had always been generous. So George was called "A terrible Radical" by his cousin for his queer remark. Then Mr. Kestell left his wife half his fortune with Rushbrook House, and the other half between his two daughters, out of which, however, ten thousand pounds was to be paid to Jesse Vicary, and another ten thousand to his sister.

The world was loud in its praises. Mr. Kestell was indeed generous to the orphan children. Jesse Vicary had got more than he deserved, for lately he had not given much satisfaction to his patron. And as to Symee, why, she would be ruined with so much money. It was even mooted, *sub rosâ*, whether that will which had mysteriously disappeared was not to revoke this bequest; but the further inference, that Jesse had got hold of it and destroyed it, was too preposterous to be much entertained, except now and then by Mrs. Eagle Bennison's "I wonder if—"

But further surprises were in store for Rushbrook. Mrs. Kestell became a strong woman, and took to the world like a duck to water. She insisted on buying a London house as soon as possible, and entertained on the plea that it was for her daughters' sake. Nay, more—she became an active domestic tyrant; and having so long husbanded her strength, found that she had plenty to spare for this purpose.

Elva and Amice had begun by humouring her every wish, so that she might miss her husband less; but they found that their days of freedom were over. Amice had been used to giving up her own way; but Elva found it a hard trial; still, she determined to bear it without a murmur. Mrs. Kestell could always make her obey by one word of appeal to a dead father; and she used her power unmercifully.

Amice's doings were interesting to Rushbrook only in so far as they proved that she was "a little off her head;" "as I always have said," remarked Miss Heaton, when she heard that Amice had scruples about property, and had signed a deed of gift of most of her share of the money to be used for the good of the poor

of London, the money being vested in the name of Jesse Vicary.

If Amice had married a groom, and disgraced herself by first running away with him, the outcry could not have been greater. Strangely enough, too, her odd ways and her uncanny second-sight had disappeared since her father's death. She was more like other people, and ought, so people said, to have known better than to waste good money on the poor. As well throw your gold pieces at once into the sea, as sink them in good works, where no result can be visible.

"It was quite different if one built something which could be called after your own name. That really was *distingué*," Mrs. Eagle Bennison said, "and was becoming fashionable."

So, though Amice seemed much like other people, except less selfish, she was pronounced "crazier than ever."

Jesse Vicary was not a gentleman, so what he did was of no importance; still, Mrs. Eagle Bennison often heard about him from George Guthrie, who really liked the lower orders apart from Societies to do them good.

Well, Jesse and his sister actually lived still in Golden Sparrow Street, though they each had the interest of ten thousand pounds. George had just come to Court Garden after a long stay in town, and his cousin was listening to the news.

"You see how difficult, George, it is to reform low-class people. Birds of a feather flock together; even if you buy a pretty cage for them they won't live in it. That's what comes of building model cottages. I always tell the Squire it is no use; they like to be dirty best."

In vain George Guthrie explained that Jesse lived in a very nice little house, which was as clean as 'Liza could make it, and that this young person had better not hear his cousin abusing her Mr. Vicary, adding:

"Jesse Vicary is a man in a thousand; he gives his life up to reforming Golden Sparrow Street, and he thinks he's only doing his duty. Dear coz, judge not till you have paid a visit to the Golden Sparrow neighbourhood."

"Quite a waste of time, I think."

"Oh, but he writes for the 'Current Reader,' too. Hoel Fenner is always there, so I assure you you will meet good company."

"Don't mention that wicked literary young man to me, George. I suppose he

means to make up to Elva again; but I know dear Mrs. Kestell is looking higher now, so Elva will never be allowed to make a mistake again."

"Elva, my dear cousin, never will make another mistake, she is too wise; she has succumbed to the last infirmity of noble minds; in fact, she has written a novel."

"Written a novel! Not under her own name? It is so terrible when a young woman dubs herself as literary, no sensible young man will marry her."

"Well, you must tell her this when they come here after the season, the beginning of August. You know she is clever, and she had better write novels than be a martyr to her father's memory any longer. I declare the dead are sometimes as tyrannous as the living."

"George, how shocking! But you haven't heard my news. There really is going to be a wedding at Rushbrook, and this time, I am sure, the lady will not be clever enough to say 'no.' Guess."

George guessed wrong, of course. How was a poor bachelor to be equal to probing the secrets of the heart?

"Well, it is Mr. Heaton himself. Miss Heaton went out for a fortnight's holiday, and during that time he became engaged to Betta Akister; but she says gravely that her father was so much put out and hindered by Walter's attempt at matrimony, that she must manage all this without him. There's a meteor, or an eclipse, or something expected in the sky."

"Poor Miss Heaton! Well done, Herbert! Why, she never tried to shield him in that quarter."

George chuckled over this at intervals during the rest of the day; but he was more interested in Elva than in Herbert Heaton's love affairs.

When he had been in London he had learnt to forgive Hoel, who was altogether a changed man; and Hoel had let out his hopeless secret, though without revealing the reason of that "mysterious exodus" as George called it. Elva still treated him as a stranger. They met pretty frequently at other people's houses, but the result was nil. As a last resource, George wickedly suggested that Hoel should review Elva's novel; he little guessed that he had done it once before.

This novel, published under her own name, was a very different work of art from the "Undine of To-day." It was a simple story, but the pathos, if somewhat too sombre for a general reader, was true.

Hoel in his rooms read it, but positively dared not review it as highly as he should have done had he had no connection with the writer, for fear Elva should think he was not sincere. Poor Hoel, he was very sick at heart. His love had deepened; had outgrown all its proper limits; and yet he was no nearer to Elva. He knew he should never dare to mention it to her. Jesse was his only confidant and his only comforter, though, as he thought it perfectly natural that Hoel should love for the rest of his life, and never get further reward, the comfort was cold, if of a high order.

The cousins had resolved to keep Jesse's name a secret for a year, in order, if possible, to keep away all suspicion from the memory of Mr. Kestell. Amice knew everything; and she, though she would not touch the money that was so tainted with sin, agreed to keep all knowledge of this from her mother and sister. She said that Jesse had the right to command, she must only obey; but she began a new and a happier life. To her imagination it seemed that the curse was taken away, for she entirely lost all her much dreaded second-sight, from the day of her father's death. Clever doctors would, of course, have explained it to her in another way; but the mind is altogether out of the province of medicine.

Amice believed in penance; and hers took the form of going out to parties to please her mother; but this duty over, she would find time to dress herself in an unfashionable style, and go to Golden Sparrow Street to have a chat with Symee, who was indeed a happy woman. There was no more pinching, no more strange looks from Jesse, only just the work she liked—seeing after his bodily comfort, of which he was so careless, and helping him with his poor people.

When Miss Amice came, Jesse received her as if she had been the Queen in person, and Symee, of course, could not welcome her enough. There was always so much to talk about in the disposing of the fund. Jesse would consult Miss Amice; but Symee noticed, with pleasure, that this latter deferred entirely to Jesse's opinion.

"We owe all our happiness to you and Mr. Kestell," Symee often said at first; but as these words really pained Miss Amice, she left off saying them; but, to her, the memory of Mr. Kestell was sacred.

Towards the end of the season, and when Elva and Amice were looking forward to seeing once more their beloved forest lands, their aunt, Mrs. Fitzgerald, was escorting

them to a big "at home," at the house of a fashionable lady. Mrs. Fitzgerald was now very gracious to her nieces, because her own daughters had all married first, and she could afford to be kind to "those poor Kestells."

"By the way, Elva," said her aunt, as they were driving to their destination, "Mr. Fenner is sure to be there, he is thought so much of in the literary world now. I hear he is going to marry Sir Arthur Parkes' daughter. She is a very clever girl, and very charming. It was a pity you changed your mind, for really he is quite a parti now. The cousin who inherited all the uncle's property has lately died, and Mr. Fenner will now be rich as well as distinguished. I think you were a very silly girl. Literature is quite the fashion now, and if you can't get rank——"

Elva was brave, she did not betray by word or look that her heart sank down, and that all the sunshine went out of the day.

"I hope he will be happy," was her answer; but Amice understood. Unobserved, she slipped her hand into her sister's, and she suddenly hated Hoel. "I thought he was true to her now," she said to herself.

That afternoon the sisters got separated in the crowd, and Elva met Hoel face to face. She held out her hand as usual, and poor Hoel, who always felt utterly stupid near to her from excess of humility and dread of putting himself still farther from her, murmured a commonplace remark.

"I thought you would be here—— I wanted to tell you myself that——"

"Thank you," she interrupted him, very quietly. "I wanted to be the first to——"

"To say you did not believe that I want to retract past words."

Elva flushed, she positively could not master the tell-tale colour; she could hardly believe she heard aright. Certainly Hoel Fenner was honest now; but did he think she still held him bound by those old, false promises? Still, it was cruel of him. And yet, how was she to cure herself? This must cure her. One thing she was sure of, he could never guess her feelings.

"No," she answered, "I wished merely to congratulate you."

Elva had never looked so dignified and beautiful as she did now. Hoel would have kissed the hem of her garment, but

modern society, in the form of a "squash," entirely precluded this idea being carried out; besides, Elva's own far-off dignity, in any case, kept him rational.

"At having changed my views?" he asked, wistfully, as he looked at her for one instant.

Elva could bear no more; she saw some one who claimed her attention, and she left Hoel without answering his remark.

He remained, staring at nothing, in his corner. He hated the room, and the people, and almost life itself. He said his punishment was greater than he could bear. At this moment Amice touched him.

"I was looking for you, Mr. Fenner."

Her voice trembled with indignation. She looked round and saw they were quite alone in this crowd.

"Let me congratulate you," said Amice, scornfully.

Irony being a new weapon in her hands, she used it rather wildly.

"On what?"

"On your engagement to Miss Parkes, who is clever, I hear, and very, very——"

"Good Heavens! Is that what your sister meant?"

Hoel turned hot all over.

"We have just heard it."

"What nonsense, Amice! You know better. You know I am sick to death; I live on crumbs of bare notice. I know your sister will never, never forgive me, never love me; and yet I go on hoping against hope. What am I to do? How can I come to her with no excuse? You, at least, know the truth——"

Amice was conquered at once. Her eyes filled with tears.

"Forgive me, it was only to-day. I felt sure that——"

"That what?"

"Elva loves you still."

"But will not trust me. That is terrible."

"I don't know. When will Mr. Pellew take his own name? Till then—I——"

Poor Amice! The shame of the past swept over her again.

"My cousin will do so now if you wish it."

"He often tells me what you are to him," said Amice, her blue eyes fixed on Hoel. "Without you he would have taken life in the wrong way."

"Then the obligation is mutual. But, Amice, let me speak to you as I would to a sister. Don't believe such rumours

again; they only pain me. If your sister will never forgive, then I shall never marry."

"I must tell her the truth, then," said Amice.

"But remember what she will suffer. No, I can bear it for her sake. You have heard, perhaps, that I am a rich man now. When it is too late, perhaps—Still——"

"Yes, I see."

They parted; but Hoel was in a fever of misery. There was nothing, nothing he would take in exchange for Elva. Riches had come too late.

He walked on heedlessly, speaking to people who spoke to him, but looking for Elva.

He found her at last, just as she was going out of the room.

"One minute, Miss Kestell. You mistook me just now. I was talking of your book. But I suppose you still hate critics?"

He tried to speak lightly.

"You said once that those who aspired to write must be willing to suffer," she said, with a new hope that Miss Parkes was a myth.

"I was one-sided; but I know better now. Those who aspire to be critics must understand suffering."

Mrs. Fitzgerald was coming down upon them in full sail. She was bound for another fashionable port.

"Good-bye," said Elva. "we go to Rushbrook to-morrow," and Hoel fell back into his slough of despondency.

A week afterwards he was raised up from it, and looked up into a blue sky. He received a letter from Elva.

"Rushbrook.

"DEAR MR FENNER,—Since I saw you Amice has told me the truth. Why did you both hide it from me for so long? It was for his sake and my mother's sake I see; but oh, why did I not know it before? I would have faced the world for him and with him; the sin of those we love must be ours too. Did you think I feared poverty or shame with him? No one knew him as I did, and yet I was not allowed to help him.

"But even now, though sometimes I feel crushed by remembrance, I am glad to know the truth. If he can know anything now, he knows that I should never have forsaken him.

"You feared to share our shame; but you came back at last.

"Who am I to blame you? I am but his daughter, even now. But I cannot forget—now I know it—what you have done since. It is through you and Mr. Pellew that we have been shielded; it is through you that his memory is not defamed.

"For her sake and for his I accept the sacrifice. Some day, if we meet again, you will let me thank you.

"ELVA KESTELL."

Hoel never knew how often he read that letter. He fancied he had known Elva before; but these few words revealed to him something nobler than he had imagined, almost nobler than he had formerly been able to conceive—a woman whose love was as the immoveable rock, whose forgiveness was as healing to the bruised heart as cool ointment on the scorched flesh. How was Hoel to be worthy of this love? Even now, however, her words held out but a faint hope for himself.

He put on his hat and went towards Golden Sparrow Street. At the entrance he met George Guthrie.

"Hulloa, Fenner, are you blind; I've been waving my stick at you as if you were a cabby, and all to no purpose. I've run up from Rushbrook to congratulate Jesse on his new name. Queer, these sudden discoveries, eh? It makes me remember— Well, it almost explains a good many puzzles."

"No, no," said Hoel, earnestly; "don't puzzle out anything. Help us to make it appear natural. It's Jesse's greatest wish. Have you come from Rushbrook?"

"Yes; and it's looking its best. The Kestells are there, and look all the better for mixing in general society. Amice is getting quite commonplace. By the way, why don't you come down for a little holiday? But perhaps you are going abroad?"

"Miss Kestell might not like it."

"Elva has taken to writing novels. That, of course, is supposed to alter some people; but when I knew her, she was a girl who had a trick of sticking to her original opinion about people. To be quite plain, I really think she is expecting to see you."

Hoel paused on the threshold of Jesse's house.

"Do you think I have the least chance? The truth is, I've been a coward all along; and now——"

"Turn over a new leaf and try. I've come with an invitation from Elva to—let me see, your cousin, isn't he now?—to spend a week at Rushbrook House with Symee.

If he has not renounced all pleasure, his native air will do Jesse good. He's a fine fellow, and my cousin has just recollected the fact; she says, 'He always did look like a gentleman, I said so years ago.'

Hoel smiled, as he said, sadly :

"Elva didn't ask me."

"Pshaw! Do you think she ever would? But, take the word of a bachelor, she expects you all the same."

And then they walked upstairs, and Hoel sat down, and, instead of hearing what was said, he lost himself in a beautiful dream of autumn glory on the moors.

That evening Elva received a tiny note; but she took it out on the moor to read it all alone.

The moonlight was painting the moorland; every shade of palest blue, of grey, and of silver was over the landscape; but the mist did not yet hide the waning lines of hills; and the wind swept softly over the lovely land.

"I must come, I must, if only, Elva, my dearest, my life, to ask for your forgiveness, if only just to feel the touch of your hand, and to know that you, the best, the most noble of women, have not altogether forgotten that I love you, and that, if that love is not yet perfect, it shall become so in time, and that when it is perfect, you will not reject it.

"HOEL FENNER."

"P.S.—I will be on the moor, where I first picked the gentians, to-morrow, at six o'clock. If I see you there, I shall know that love like yours can forgive cowardice like mine."

The evening is drawing in over the forest. The sun has sunk behind the high land. In the west every shade of orange, apricot, yellow, and lemon is here swept across the sky in bands that melt into each other. From the east a dark-grey, misty horizon comes stretching into the western glory, getting darker as it rises, till it, too, fades into blue-and-silver above the heads of two who are slowly making their way home almost in silence, because the fulness of love is silent. Above their heads one or two stars alone stand out to herald their fellows. The harvest moon has not yet risen; only a bank of misty, pale purple is where she must appear. It is not dark nor light. The daylight colours of foliage

have all disappeared, and the distant trees are drawn out in neutral tint; but the yellow stubble fields are plain, and the silver-sand on the winding moorland paths appears white in the half-light. The distant outlines of undulating country are still visible; but nothing hard remains, save the dark trees against the sky. Nature is hushed, except for a few sounds, the familiarity of which prevents the loneliness from being oppressive. A distant watch-dog's bark, and, nearer, a robin's wild, sweet notes rise clear and strong from the trees of the gill; the stream trickles steadily; a faint evening wind slightly rustles the beeches, and lifts the leaves of its neighbour, till nothing is left but a tree of silver. Up the next rising stands a pyramidal stack of hop-poles, that look for all the world like a wigwam; and when the two have passed it, they turn and gaze on the scene, and notice that the hop-poles rise dark and clearly defined against the orange sky. The grey curtain deepens in the south, and the apricot sky becomes intensified, whilst the yellow light seems to dart up and quiver into the lemon colour above, then sink down again into the slowly fading apricot band.

Now the pair have reached the brow of the Beacon, and they can see a few scattered houses. In one of them a bright light seems to give a friendly welcome to passers-by. Suddenly a little girl of some eight years comes towards them. She is laden with two heavy parcels, which she has slung across her shoulders. It is the family bread, and the green corn for the chickens, and she is making her way to some cottages more than a mile away.

Elva stoops down and says a few kind words, and Hoel, out of the fulness of an overflowing heart, also stoops, and puts a new half-crown in the child's hand. Then she smilingly trudges off into the deepening twilight, patient and uncomplaining for her long walk. That little gift has made the bread and the green corn quite light.

"My darling," Hoel says, "I feel as if I must give something to everybody at Rushbrook, because of my happiness."

And Elva answered :

"There are so many burdens we can help to lighten, together—oh, Hoel!—together."